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Public Ledger Building

Crime Solution Catalysts

An unusual, exclusive crime-solving organization meets monthly on the top floor of the historic Public Ledger Building in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. In a famed walnut-paneled meeting room, members of The Vidocq Society honor Eugène François Vidocq, the brilliant 18th century French detective who served the Sûreté, by applying their collective forensic skills and experience to "cold case" homicides and unsolved deaths. At Vidocq meetings Vidocq Society Members (V.S.M.'s) evaluate, investigate, refocus, revivify and solve the unsolved deaths officially brought to them.

V.S.M.'s are forensic professionals and motivated private citizens who, as a public service, donate deductive, scientific and other talents for the common good. A long-unsolved homicide or death is the focus of a Vidocq Society meeting during which the case and its evidence are dissected for members and invited guests, all with an eye towards rekindling or refocusing the investigation.

When cases meet Vidocq's stringent criteria and the investigating agency seeks our participation, V.S.M.'s serve in the background at the pleasure and direction of law enforcement.

In our role as crime solution catalysts we are equally as satisfied when our participation in a re-investigation moves a case forward incrementally as we are when law enforcement wins the conviction of the person or persons responsible for the crime.



The Rotunda

The Vidocq Society is a Nonprofit, 501c(3) corporation, which, by the terms of its charter, is a fraternal organization comprised of professionals and non-professionals who meet in a social setting to discuss unsolved crimes. Our work is pro bono and we do not consider every case presented to us. Our sole purpose is to act as a catalyst and provide guidance to law enforcement agencies to assist them in solving these crimes. Opinions offered by our members are personal opinions offered in the spirit of cooperation and goodwill, based only upon the facts presented, and should not be considered formal or legally binding opinions of the Vidocq Society.

Latest update for this website: March 3, 2010





THE VIDOCQ SOCIETY

VERITAS VERITATUM - TRUTH BEGETS TRUTH
SERVING LAW ENFORCEMENT NATIONWIDE
SINCE 1990

NAVIGATION 

THE FOUNDING OF THE VIDOCQ SOCIETY



In 1990, three forensic experts gathered for lunch and their discussion turned to the solving of cold cases.

William L. Fleisher, a former Philadelphia Police Officer and FBI agent, was then Philadelphia's second-in-command U.S. Customs Special Agent. Frank Bender was a well-known forensic sculptor from Philadelphia. Richard Walter was a prison psychologist from Michigan.

Original Founders:
William L. Fleisher, Richard Walter, and Frank Bender
The trio wanted to establish a venue where like-minded persons, both in and outside the field of forensics, could gather to discuss and debate crimes and mysteries. The Vidocq Society was born, named for Eugène François Vidocq (1775-1857), the criminal-turned-detective who founded the French Sûreté and is considered to have been the first modern detective.

The first meeting took place at the old Philadelphia Navy Yard. Today, the Society meets monthly at The Union League of Philadelphia.

After the founding, federal, state and local law enforcers and forensic experts from all over the nation joined. After a time, the Society narrowed its focus to work exclusively on unsolved cold case homicides.

The Society's bylaws call for 82 Vidocq Society Members (V.S.M.s), one for each year of Vidocq's life. In addition, scores of additional men and women from diverse professional backgrounds have joined as

Special members and also wear the distinctive red, white, and blue Vidocq Society rosette.

Vidocq Society members come from all walks of life and include experienced investigators from federal, state and local law enforcement agencies and the private sector; internationally renowned forensic experts in the fields of pathology, criminology, dactylography, forensic dentistry, psychology, polygraphy and anthropological facial reconstruction; and many former federal, state and local career prosecutors. All share a dedication to the search for truth and justice that binds them together in the tradition of the great detectives past and present.

Sadly, Frank Bender passed away in 2011. Richard Walter left the Society in 2016. Bill Fleisher continues to serve the Society as its Commissioner Emeritus.

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THE VIDOCQ SOCIETY IN THE NEWS

-  WHYY (PBS): Cold case investigators behind Philly's Vidocq Society are in high demand
-  The Guardian: Vidocq Society – the murder club
-  National Public Radio (NPR): Fresh Air – The Vidocq Society: Solving Murders Over Lunch
-  Telegraph (UK): The Vidocq Society: Murder on the Menu
-  SJ Magazine: The Heirs of Sherlock Holmes
-  Paris Match: Les détectives de la dernière chance (in French)
-  Esquire – The Secret World of Earth's Best Detectives
-  ABC News 20/20: Murder Mystery Plagues Oregon Town (first aired October 15, 2010)
-  ABC News 20/20: Cold Case Squad: Modern-Day 'Sherlock Holmes' Team Takes on Oregon Slaying





New York Times: The Heirs of Holmes, Hot on the Trail; Sleuths in Armchairs Pursue Crimes Baffling the Authorities



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NAVIGATION 

OFFICERS & DIRECTORS

COMMISSIONER

M. Fredric Rieders, Ph.D.

Expertise: Forensic Toxicology

Background: Dr. Rieders has been a forensic toxicologist and laboratory director serving for over 30 years at NMS Labs where he was President, CEO and Chairman of the Board. Dr. Rieders is also a member of the Society of Forensic Toxicologists (SOFT), the International Association of Forensic Toxicologists (TIAFT), the World Association of Medical Law (WAML), and the National Association of Medical Examiners (NAME) where he serves on multiple committees in support of the associations goals. In addition to serving as Commissioner for The Vidocq Society, he is also the Chief Science Officer.

COMMISSIONER EMERITUS

William L. Fleisher

COMMISSIONER EMERITUS

Benjamin J. Redmond

FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER AND CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD

Howard Lebofsky, Esq.

Expertise: Interviewing, interrogation, and complex corporate and governmental agency investigations.

Background: Former Senior Attorney, City of Philadelphia, Solicitors Office and Philadelphia Police detective.

SECOND DEPUTY COMMISSIONER, MEMBERSHIP DIRECTOR, AND CASE MANAGER

Thomas C. McAndrew

Expertise: Cold case homicide investigation

Background: Homicide Detective with the Lehigh County District Attorney's Office, President of Pennsylvania

Homicide Investigators Association, member of a national "Cold case working group" by the National Institute of Justice, Member of the Middle Atlantic Cold Case Homicide Investigators Association, Member of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences.

SECRETARY

Stacy T. Forchetti, Esq.

Expertise: Jury Trials, Appeals, Criminal Law, Hearings, and Evidence Collection.

Background: Former Assistant District Attorney; currently Senior Litigation Counsel for a Philadelphia law firm.

TREASURER

Jon Cohen, CFE (Ret.)

Expertise: Criminal investigations, narcotics, public corruption, intelligence collection and analysis.

Background: Retired FBI Supervisory Intelligence Analyst and Senior Instructor – FBI Academy, Quantico, VA. Retired Senior Narcotics Agent – Pennsylvania Office of Attorney General

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Barbara J. Cohan-Saavedra, Esq. – Board Member

Expertise: Criminal Investigations, litigation, prosecution, narcotics, national security, espionage, foreign languages

Background: Former Assistant District Attorney, former Assistant U.S. Attorney

Walter B. Donaldson II, CFE, CFCI, CFSSP – Board Member

Expertise: Criminal Investigations, White Collar and Cyber Crimes, Missing Persons, Interviewing and Interrogations.

Background: CEO of Global Compliance Investigations; COO of Freeh Sporkin & Sullivan; Retired Global Investigations Director of Fortune 10 financial institutions; Veteran of U.S. Coast Guard – Tactical Law Enforcement Teams.

Scott A. Duffey – Board Member

Expertise: Criminal investigation of White Collar, Robbery, Violent and other major crimes

Background: Adjunct Professor, co-director of Wilmington University Criminal Justice Institute. Retired as Supervisory Special Agent of the FBI after 22 years of service.

Edward J. Gaughan – Board Member

Nathan J. Gordon – Board Member

Expertise: Polygraph, Forensic Interviewing, Forensic Statement Analysis, and Interrogation.

Background: Director of the Academy for Scientific Investigative Training, President of Keystone Intelligence Network.

President of the International Society of Polygraph Examiners (ISOPE)

Joseph F. Itri – Board Member

Expertise: Investigation of Homicides and Cold Cases.

Background: New Jersey State Police 18 years, Major Crimes Unit, Cold Case Unit, Assistant Unit Head of the Cold Case Unit which comprises a Cold Case Regional Task Force.

David MacNeil – Board Member

Expertise: Crime Scene Investigation, Interviews & Interrogations, Cold Case & Missing Persons

Background: Currently CEO Mac Neil Investigations & Forensic Consulting; Currently an Instructor for US Dept of Justice LEIC National Forensic Academy; Retired after thirty-seven years with Watertown PD.

John T. Maxwell – Board Member

Expertise: Criminal Investigations, Civil Matters, Special Victims, Juvenile Aid.

Background: Forty-two years on Philadelphia Police Department, Chief of Detective Bureau. Served as a supervisor or commander in every major operational bureau.

John G. Nemec – Board Member

Expertise: Investigations, Interviewing and Interrogations, Cold Case, Missing Persons.

Background: Over thirty years of experience in investigations and training for both public and private entities.

Currently provides training for the U.S. Department of State; provide investigation and security consulting and is Retired as a Special Agent of the FBI after serving 27 years.

William Fleisher - Honorary Director

Advisory Positions

Frank A. Mayer, III, Esq. - General Counsel

Barbara Cohan-Saavedra, Esquire

Edward A. Tenuto

Marc Bourne

Todd J Giliberto - Post-Presentation Work Group Co-Chair

Walter B. Donaldson II, CFE, CFCI, CFSSP - Chief Information Security Officer

John T. Maxwell - Public Information Officer, Post-Presentation Work Group Co-Chair

John Brick, PHD, MA, FAPA - Editor in Chief, Publications

Dr. Brick is responsible for the development, solicitation and editorial decisions regarding all didactic and scientific publications for the Vidocq Society including the Forensic Overview Series, The Vidocq Topic Guide to Cold Case Investigations (co-edited by Howard Lebofsky) and other ongoing projects.

Stacy T. Forchetti, Esq. - Editor, The Vidocq Society Monthly Newsletter

M. Frederic Rieders, Ph.D. - Chief Science Officer

Benjamin Redmond - Supernumerary

David Keatley, Ph.D. - Post-Presentation Work Group Co-Chair

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